

## **Press release**

Wednesday 15 November 2017

### **National Guardian for the NHS calls for action on speaking up**

**Dr Henrietta Hughes, the National Guardian for the NHS, is publishing a set of recommendations following concerns raised by staff about the speaking up culture at Southport and Ormskirk NHS Trust.**

The case was referred to the National Guardian's Office as many people had spoken up at the trust but their concerns were not properly acted on. The review identified failures to act appropriately on multiple and serious allegations and a number of wide ranging issues that represented significant barriers to speaking up. These included a culture of bullying and alleged discriminatory behaviour.

As a result of the review, the National Guardian's Office has made 22 recommendations for the trust and one for the Care Quality Commission and encourages all organisations to reflect on these and apply the learning to their own cultures and processes.

Dr Hughes said:

"I would like to thank Southport and Ormskirk NHS Trust and all those who were involved in the review for their cooperation, willingness to work together, and appetite for learning. Many individuals at the trust said their views or concerns had not previously been taken seriously. The trust also failed to consider the needs of its black and minority ethnic staff.

"I have published a set of 22 recommendations for the trust, which are designed to improve workers' ability to speak up and to tackle the barriers to speaking up that were present in the organisation. My review also highlights areas for improvement in the Fit and Proper Persons Test which I have recommended that the Care Quality Commission addresses in its revised guidance.

"I can, however, only act on cases that I am aware of. If any individual or organisation within the NHS feels that they have a speaking up case that has not been dealt with in accordance with best practice, I would encourage them to refer the matter to my office for consideration."

Karen Jackson, interim Chief Executive, Southport & Ormskirk Hospital NHS Trust said:

"We were pleased to be able to work with the National Guardian's Office to review how speaking up is, and has been, handled by the trust. We encouraged staff from

across the trust to take part and they raised a range of concerns. Most of these concerns went back a good number of years.

“The trust now has a new senior management team in place. The learning from the review is a welcome and helpful addition to the robust action plan we have in place to ensure that speaking up is seen as a way to make improvements for our staff and for our patients.

Chris Hopson, Chief Executive of NHS Providers said:

“This is a constructive and valuable report. It provides welcome insight for all trusts into what makes speaking up work well and sets out the process and policies that support it.

“It highlights how openness and transparency from senior leaders are vital in ensuring staff are treated fairly at work. The focus on improving the culture for black and ethnic minority staff is particularly welcome given the concerns that exist right across the NHS.”

You can read our [Annual Report](#) and the [case review report into Southport and Ormskirk NHS Trust](#) on our website.

**>ENDS<**

**PHOTO:** Dr Henrietta Hughes, National Guardian for the NHS.

#### **NOTES TO EDITORS:**

- All trusts in England have a Freedom to Speak Up Guardian in place. The standard NHS contract requires organisations to nominate a guardian.
- There are 530 individuals in a Freedom to Speak Up Guardian or supporting role
- Up to the end of June 2017, guardians had dealt with nearly 4,000 cases, of which over 1,000 included an element of patient safety/quality of care.
- Over the last 12 months the National Guardian’s Office has created regional networks to support guardians and delivered two national training and development events.
- The National Guardian’s Office has begun collecting data from trusts, with the information from the [first quarter of 2017/18](#) available on our website.
- Our [Freedom to Speak Up Guardian Survey 2017](#) revealed that 86 per cent of respondents had direct access to their chief executive and 76 per cent had direct access to their non-executive director with direct responsibility for speaking up.
- Freedom to Speak Up is now integrated into the Care Quality Commission’s well-led inspection framework
- The [case review process](#) was launched as a 12-month pilot in June 2017
- Details of how to submit a case for review [are available here](#)